Vol. 1, No. 3

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

CHILDREN'S BUREAU

MONTHLY RELIEF BULLETIN -- MARCH, 1932

By Anne E. Geddes

Relief Rises 11 Per Cent from February to March

Continuing the sharp upturn of the previous month, relief in March rose 11 per cent over February, again establishing a new high level for the period of the depression. March expenditures of $28,274,678 were reported by 988 agencies or divisions of departments administering a very large proportion of the total relief in 124 cities. The February relief bill in these cities, which represent 56 per cent of the urban population and 31 per cent of the total population of the United States, was $25,449,420.

Of the 14 classes of reporting agencies, all but the Salvation Army show increases in expenditures between February and March. The general public departments, public work-relief agencies, and private emergency committees, register the largest expansion, with increases in disbursements of 18, 12, and 35 per cent, respectively.

More than 1,000,000 Families Receiving Relief in March

With only partial information available on the number of families receiving relief, it is estimated that in the 124 reporting cities, well over 1,000,000 different families were on the relief rolls in March. As is shown in Table 1, an aggregate of 807,964 families were reported aided by 738 agencies administering outright relief only. Additional data, received but not included in this tabulation because of difficulties in classification, bring the total families reported to 1,018,415. Unquestionably there is considerable duplication in this figure. Some families are receiving relief from more than one agency and so are reported more than once. Some agencies, moreover, probably do not eliminate all duplications from their own case counts. It is believed, however, that any duplications existing in the reported figures would be more than offset by a count of families aided by those agencies which keep no record of this item.

Comparison with March, 1931, Shows Increase in Relief of 72 Per Cent and in Families Aided of 80 Per Cent

Indication of the stress and strain under which relief organizations are operating is afforded by comparison of the figures for March, 1931, and March, 1932. Despite the fact that relief agencies a year ago were carrying an excessively heavy load, relief expenditures increased 72 per cent between last March and this, according to reports of 988 agencies. In the same interval the number of families aided by 738 agencies increased 80 per cent.

While the burden of expansion has been shared by most classes of agencies, those reporting the most significant increases over last year are the general public departments, the public veterans' offices, the old-age departments, the nonsectarian family societies, the emergency committees, and the public work-relief agencies. The fact that old age laws in several States have gone into effect within the past year and a half accounts for the large increase in old-age allowances. Actual decline in relief since last year was reported by the Salvation Army, the miscellaneous group of agencies, and the private work-relief agencies.

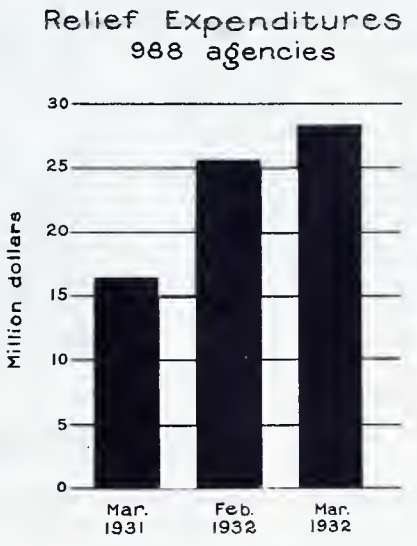

Diagram Depicts Rise in Relief Expenditures

In the diagram above, the rise in relief expenditures from March, 1931, and from February, 1932, to March, 1932, is shown graphically.

(continued on page 3)

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Table 1. - Number of families aided and amount of relief given in March, 1932, and comparison with March, 1931, and February, 1932

988 agencies or divisions of departments in 124 cities of 50,000 or more population

Type of agency	Number of agencies	Families aided			Amounts given			Per cent change from February, 1932, to March, 1932		Per cent change from March, 1931, to March, 1932	
		March 1931	February 1932	March 1932	March 1931	February 1932	March 1932	Families	Amounts	Families	Amounts
Agencies reporting both families and amounts											
Outright relief											
Public departments											
General relief 1/	86	179,462	317,466	352,669	$4,243,897	$6,921,017	$8,156,857	11	18	97	92
Veterans' relief	34	21,345	38,477	40,130	668,891	1,026,013	1,114,215	4	9	88	67
Special-allowance groups											
Mothers' aid	83	32,584	37,883	38,340	1,553,702	1,800,411	1,832,513	1	2	18	18
Old-age aid	30	19,510	39,647	40,445	609,098	1,118,638	1,138,952	2	2	107	87
Aid for the blind 2/	32	4,837	5,178	5,213	111,740	119,642	120,094	-	-	8	7
Private agencies 3/											
Nonsectarian family societies	112	104,387	193,641	193,506	1,994,275	3,132,416	3,326,739	(4)	6	85	67
Jewish agencies	66	8,913	11,786	12,117	325,764	376,695	408,678	3	8	36	25
Catholic agencies	41	16,465	20,596	22,765	263,288	281,781	314,842	11	12	38	20
Veterans' agencies	91	5,265	7,578	8,009	78,495	92,183	93,851	6	2	52	20
Emergency committees	19	4,262	52,176	60,070	43,165	671,249	904,749	15	35	1309	1996
Salvation Army	81	38,148	29,661	25,860	244,084	217,150	214,184	-13	-1	-32	-12
Other	63	12,571	8,581	8,840	135,317	104,938	109,357	3	4	-30	-19
Total, exclusive of special-allowances and Salvation Army	5/ 512	352,670	650,301	698,106	$7,753,092	$12,606,292	$14,429,288	7	14	98	86
Total	5/ 738	447,749	762,670	807,964	$10,271,716	$15,862,133	$17,735,031	6	12	80	73
Agencies reporting amounts only											
Outright relief											
Public departments	71	-	-	-	$1,643,782	$1,951,215	$2,080,258	-	-	-	-
Private agencies	89	-	-	-	611,286	2,083,580	2,431,712	-	-	-	-
Wage relief											
Public departments	54	-	-	-	1,269,445	3,559,977	3,997,341	-	12	-	215
Private agencies	36	-	-	-	2,605,288	1,992,515	2,030,336	-	2	-	-22
Total wage relief	90	-	-	-	3,874,733	5,552,492	6,027,677	-	9	-	56
Total outright and wage relief reportsd by all agencies	5/ 988	-	-	-	$16,401,517	$25,449,420	$28,274,678	-	11	-	72

1/ These figures may include some mothers' aid, some aid for the blind, and some veterans' relief.
2/ As some offices administering aid to the blind make quarterly or semiannual payments, the percentage of change from February to March has not been computed.
3/ In several cities private agencies are administering some public funds.
4/ Percentage is less than one.
5/ This figure is larger than the sum of individual agencies, as organizations reporting more than one class of relief are counted more than once.

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(continued from page 1)

65 Per Cent of March Bill Borne by Taxpayers in 1932; 62 Per Cent in 1931

As is indicated in the table below, the taxpayer supplied 65 per cent of the total relief in both February and March, 1932, as compared with 62 per cent in March of the previous year. Wage relief amounted to 21 per cent of the bill in March this year, and to 24 per cent a year ago. The special-allowance group -- mothers' aid, old-age relief, and aid to the blind--represented 16, 13, and 12 per cent of the total in March, 1931, February, 1932, and March, 1932, respectively.

Class of relief	Percentage in		
	March 1931	February 1932	March 1932
Total	100	100	100
Public	62	65	65
Private	38	35	35
Outright	76	78	79
Wage	24	22	21
Special-allowance	16	13	12
Other	84	87	88

Value of Federal Flour Relief Not Included in Reports

In order to preserve the comparability of the data, all agencies participating in this study were urged to omit from reports the value of Federal flour distributed in March. Supplementary reports on the number of pounds of flour allotted to clients were requested. Although consignments of Federal flour were not made in most communities until the latter part of March, incomplete reports indicate that flour in considerable quantities was distributed in that month by both public and private agencies in many cities scattered over the United States.

Table 2 Presents Detailed Figures on Relief Expenditures for 95 Cities

Detailed figures on relief expenditures in March, 1931, in February, 1932, and in March, 1932, are given in Table 2 on pages 4 and 5 for 95 cities for which reporting is believed to be substantially complete. The cities are listed in the table by geographical location. The table shows for each city the total amount expended in each of the three months; the amount of the pay rolls for work wages; and the percentage increase or decrease in total expenditures from March, 1931, and from February, 1932, to March, 1932.

March Expenditures $8,308,377 in New York; $2,907 in Charleston, S. C.

Striking variations in the amounts expended for relief are shown by the 95 cities. New York, with 6,930,446 population, reported expenditures of $8,308,377, while Charleston, S.C., with 62,265 population, reported expenditures of only $2,907. Five cities in addition to New York disbursed more than $1,000,000 in March. These cities are Boston, Buffalo, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Detroit.

45 of 95 Cities Operated Work-Relief Programs in March

Major work-relief projects were operated under public or private auspices in March by 45 of the 95 cities reporting complete data on expenditures. In many of these cities a very large share of the total relief was given in the form of wages. The pay rolls in New York City totaled $3,741,577; in Pittsburgh, $239,600; in Milwaukee, $234,485; in Wilmington, $115,543; in Portland, Ore., $230,287; and in San Francisco, $204,000.

Philadelphia, Cleveland, Toledo, Chicago, Kansas City, Mo., St. Louis, and Memphis gave large amounts of work relief in March, 1931, but in March, 1932, had abandoned wage programs in favor of direct relief.

March Expenditures Highest Since Slump in Most Cities

In the majority of cities March was the peak month for relief, not only for the winter of 1931-32, but for the entire period of the slump. Of the 95 cities in Table 2, 11--Toledo, Springfield, Ill., Detroit, Saginaw, Kansas City, Mo., Huntington, Winston-Salem, Memphis, Shreveport, Ft. Worth, and Los Angeles--reported reduction in relief in March, 1932, as compared with March of the previous year. Twenty-eight cities expended less in March than in February. For the group of cities in Table 2 the median percentage of increase was 83 from March to March and 8 from February to March.

(Continued on page 8)

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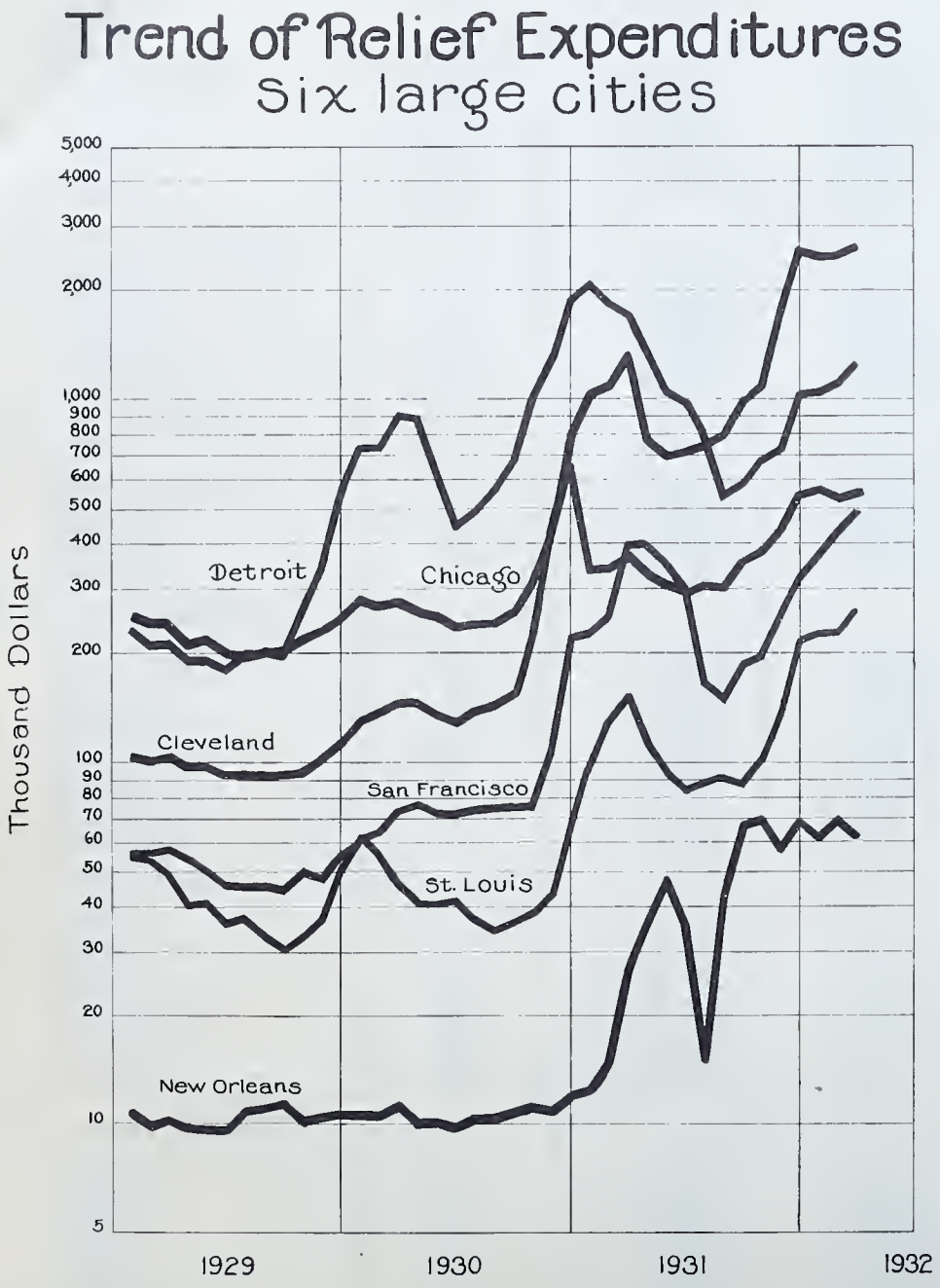
Table 2. - Expenditures for outright and wage relief in March, 1932, and comparison with March, 1931, and February, 1932 -- 95 cities

The cities included in this table are those for which reports are believed to be complete or substantially complete. Unreported emergency relief in important amounts may have been given in some cities. These figures are presented subject to revision.

City and geographical division	Agencies or divisions of departments reporting	Amount of outright and wage relief			Per cent increase or decrease from		Amount of wage relief		
		March 1931	February 1932	March 1932	Feb., 1932 to Mar., 1932	Mar., 1931 to Mar., 1932	March 1931	February 1932	March 1932
New England									
Portland	6	(1)	$18,615	$27,420	47	(1)	(1)	-	-
Boston	13	$768,481	1,110,533	1,300,752	17	69	-	-	-
Brockton	8	35,196	48,439	45,115	-7	28	-	-	-
Fall River	7	75,068	106,138	120,199	13	60	-	-	-
Lawrence	7	(1)	55,868	60,062	8	(1)	(1)	-	-
Lowell	5	49,390	63,098	70,029	11	42	-	-	-
Lynn	9	73,075	99,058	97,056	-2	33	-	-	-
Malden	10	23,554	39,133	47,671	22	102	2,596	-	-
New Bedford	7	70,898	92,764	91,880	-1	30	-	-	-
Newton	9	(1)	25,677	27,711	8	(1)	(1)	9,873	9,361
Springfield	12	88,862	159,145	182,131	14	105	-	-	-
Providence	10	108,041	138,274	150,217	9	39	60,000	69,918	72,042
Bridgeport 2/	9	94,465	105,483	115,183	9	22	45,466	45,783	56,215
Hartford	9	147,330	227,350	217,496	-4	48	28,675	67,387	81,386
New Britain	8	38,477	69,215	96,788	40	152	-	7,794	6,607
New Haven	10	40,249	114,050	123,311	8	206	1,000	51,760	56,485
Middle Atlantic									
Albany	12	47,303	82,564	89,483	8	89	-	41,303	52,443
Buffalo	20	626,476	889,795	1,026,594	15	64	176,250	171,271	224,409
New Rochelle	8	6,308	39,442	42,890	9	580	-	24,611	26,722
New York	27	3,596,101	7,166,277	8,308,377	16	131	1,393,971	3,259,425	3,741,577
Niagara Falls	10	52,767	111,050	149,524	35	183	15,000	36,129	67,530
Rochester	10	431,505	512,557	517,178	1	20	163,851	116,725	105,127
Syracuse	13	107,314	260,641	338,429	30	215	565	47,756	105,792
Yonkers	10	67,542	157,353	209,121	33	210	18,385	45,777	91,981
Allentown	3	29,619	40,811	46,026	13	55	-	-	-
Altoona	6	9,988	38,848	37,335	-4	274	-	24,392	23,472
Bethlehem 3/	4	6,399	15,287	15,151	(4)	137	-	-	-
Chester	11	18,969	35,219	34,763	-1	83	-	-	-
Erie	7	38,085	83,759	76,785	-8	102	-	4,778	5,271
Lancaster	6	11,803	17,151	18,349	7	55	-	-	-
Philadelphia	15	1,264,015	1,211,049	1,503,548	24	19	689,500	-	-
Pittsburgh	11	287,502	738,458	839,456	14	192	60,000	283,000	239,600
Scranton	5	27,870	45,460	48,350	6	73	-	-	-
Wilkes-Barre	5	45,107	90,486	117,236	30	160	-	-	-
East North Central									
Akron	11	63,035	117,749	92,814	-21	47	-	56,672	19,437
Cincinnati	14	147,688	315,507	270,276	-14	83	35,000	54,289	55,194
Cleveland	9	366,575	534,924	547,171	2	49	59,490	-	-
Columbus	13	73,269	102,086	115,160	13	57	-	45,984	54,229
Dayton	12	67,918	89,517	106,148	19	56	34,655	6,613	12,185
Toledo	6	154,056	119,086	126,731	6	-18	43,153	-	-
Evansville	4	26,989	52,092	51,953	(4)	92	-	20,944	20,178
Fort Wayne	10	42,516	92,909	77,004	-17	81	27,034	43,097	21,579
South Bend	6	33,766	50,970	51,414	1	52	-	-	-
Terre Haute	6	10,004	14,553	15,685	8	57	-	-	-
Chicago	18	1,323,230	2,511,958	2,618,822	4	98	248,054	(5)	(5)
[illegible] 2/	4	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	27	172	-	-	-

Chicago									
Springfield, Ill. 2/	7	15,715	14,828	15,004	1	-5	4,833	-	-
Detroit	17	1,693,018	1,109,438	1,227,926	11	-27	-	391,394	414,360
Grand Rapids	7	67,287	106,712	147,407	38	119	27,972	(6)	(6)
Pontiac	9	54,532	93,356	118,010	26	116	-	-	-
Saginaw	4	53,117	46,643	47,952	3	-10	-	-	-
Kenosha	8	34,319	71,935	72,366	1	111	-	-	-
Madison	5	14,029	33,851	38,444	14	174	-	-	-
Milwaukee	10	426,117	865,264	978,264	13	130	129,983	225,687	234,485
Racine	7	47,821	83,340	93,702	12	96	-	1,229	1,376
West North Central									
Minneapolis	12	106,454	311,227	300,592	-3	182	-	(5) 11,358	(5) 12,571
St. Paul	12	59,672	113,404	127,348	12	113	-	-	-
Sioux City	11	9,902	38,961	35,332	-9	257	-	13,701	11,971
Kansas City, Mo.	10	165,920	93,877	102,131	9	-38	106,988	-	-
St. Louis	13	154,518	236,237	271,723	15	76	36,839	-	-
Omaha	10	26,494	59,732	53,942	-10	104	-	-	-
Kansas City, Kans.	4	11,798	17,371	14,435	-17	22	-	-	-
Topeka	7	11,702	38,344	30,491	-20	161	8,210	35,839	28,224
South Atlantic									
Wilmington	7	16,128	168,836	187,230	11	947	-	112,441	115,543
Baltimore 2/	8	93,380	231,038	402,064	74	331	-	-	-
Washington	12	49,323	140,210	138,872	-1	182	5,965	76,159	53,796
Norfolk	8	4,672	17,123	8,804	-49	88	900	-	-
Roanoke	4	3,703	4,438	4,511	2	22	-	-	-
Huntington	6	6,622	4,576	5,840	28	-12	-	-	-
Asheville	3	(1)	9,068	9,296	3	(1)	(1)	-	-
Winston-Salem	2	10,288	6,701	6,405	-4	-38	-	-	-
Charleston, S.C.	5	2,005	2,287	2,907	27	45	-	-	-
East South Central									
Louisville	11	49,609	81,020	69,759	-14	41	21,129	45,208	24,973
Knoxville	5	9,869	21,582	21,603	(4)	119	-	18,370	18,936
Memphis	7	37,368	13,573	11,293	-17	-70	21,750	-	-
Birmingham	5	52,139	84,940	98,142	16	88	34,214	6,842	5,487
Mobile	4	1,107	7,033	8,208	17	641	-	4,193	5,505
West South Central									
New Orleans 2/	10	19,509	62,365	55,584	-11	185	2,265	52,472	48,878
Shreveport 2/	7	6,235	4,459	4,472	(4)	-28	-	-	-
Dallas 2/	6	13,388	35,019	43,330	24	224	-	19,874	23,100
Fort Worth	4	17,297	15,143	16,603	10	-4	-	-	-
Houston	7	14,220	28,796	23,472	-18	65	-	-	-
San Antonio 2/	5	4,062	19,977	11,152	-44	175	-	5,876	5,361
Mountain and Pacific									
Denver	13	29,692	162,700	154,691	-5	421	-	82,419	69,035
Seattle	12	(1)	252,459	228,831	-9	(1)	8,979	83,174	-
Tacoma	7	21,356	34,304	26,725	-22	25	-	-	-
Portland	7	148,582	285,766	306,067	7	106	110,000	213,014	230,287
Berkeley	7	22,336	41,952	42,521	1	90	4,333	13,079	7,997
Los Angeles 2/	9	684,527	589,349	677,623	15	-1	183,453	31,128	34,357
Oakland	8	110,388	270,514	174,439	-36	58	-	-	-
Sacramento	8	(1)	36,894	27,370	-26	(1)	(1)	-	-
San Diego	9	41,821	61,632	95,128	54	127	(6)	(6)	(6)
San Francisco	21	402,310	430,669	494,570	15	23	286,852	172,966	204,000

1/ Figures are not available. 2/ Reports of one or more important agencies known to be missing.
3/ In March, 1931, pay rolls for work on sewers and water mains were $29,967. As this is believed to have been ordinary public work rather than relief work it is not included here.
4/ Percentage is less than one.
5/ Work relief, administered as an incidental part of the program of one or more agencies, is not included here.
6/ Amount of wage relief is not separately reported, but is included in total expenditures.



Charts Exhibited at National Conference of Social Work Reproduced Here

The chart to the left, and others appearing on pages 7 and 8, were prepared for exhibition at the National Conference of Social Work, which was held in Philadelphia from May 15 to May 21. Each of these diagrams is plotted on a ratio background, designed to show relative or proportional, rather than absolute increases or decreases. The rate of expansion or contraction in the volume of service is indicated by the slope of the curves. The steeper the slope, the greater the rate of change. The actual figures upon which the curves are based may be read off from the vertical scale.

Rising Relief Costs Charted for Six Large Cities

The mounting cost of relief in six large cities is shown in the accompanying diagram. Detroit shows earlier response to the unemployment crisis than the other cities, with a very sharp rise in relief expenditures in the winter of 1929-30. In Chicago, San Francisco, St. Louis, and New Orleans relief reached its highest level during the past winter, but in Detroit and Cleveland the peak occurred in the winter preceding. A short-lived work-relief program accounts for the sharp rise in the Cleveland curve in the winter of 1930-31. Undoubtedly, however, in that city the effective relief level in the winter just passed was much higher than in the previous year. The recession in the Detroit curve is explained by inability of the taxpayers to maintain relief at so high a level. New Orleans, in comparison with the other cities, which suffer more severe and more prolonged winters, shows slight seasonal variation. The very sharp slump in 1931 marks the temporary exhaustion of funds.

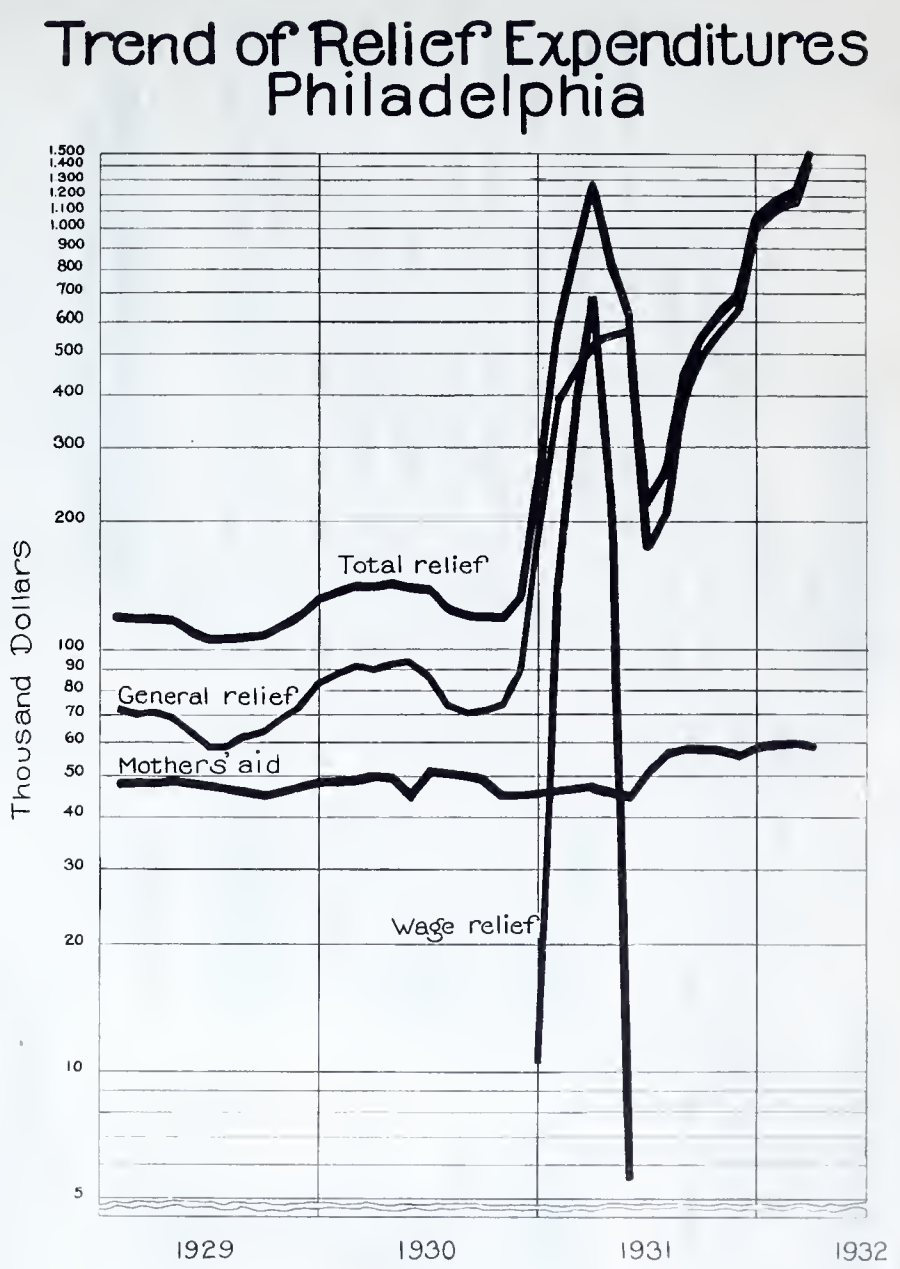
Large Emergency Funds Distributed in Philadelphia

The diagram to the right represents the trend of relief in Philadelphia during a three and a quarter year period. Although the total curve, which records the expenditures of all agencies, shows only slight rise in the first year of the depression, it is marked by signal expansion during the past two winters. Both public and private relief, other than mothers' aid and wage relief, are included in the general curve. Except in the first half of 1931, when a very large volume of emergency relief was distributed in the form of work wages, this curve closely follows the course of the total curve. The mothers' aid curve, here as in many other cities, shows a more than normal rise in the past year. The wage curve represents the large-scale work-relief program operated for six months by the unemployment-relief fund, which also during that period made large grants for direct relief to the private family agencies. In the summer of 1931 this fund was superseded by the bureau of unemployment relief. Until December the bureau was financed by municipal appropriation, but in the first quarter of 1932 it was supported wholly by private contributions.

Many Other Cities Have Similar Relief History

The relief history of many other cities resembles that of Philadelphia. Like Philadelphia, they have established new agencies to administer emergency funds or to render financial assistance to the existing relief societies. Many emergency committees have functioned for a very short period. Often, where continuity of organization has been preserved, there has been shifting from private to public and from public to private funds. Brief experimentation with work-relief programs has also been common.

Throughout the depression relief organizations in many cities have led a hand-to-mouth existence, in respect to both financing and planning. This may be explained in part by the persistent hope that prosperity was just around the corner and in part by the extreme difficulty of raising funds sufficient to meet the pressing demands of the unemployed for more than a brief period.



(continued from page 3)

Incomplete Returns Received From 29 Cities

Listed below are 29 cities which though represented in Table 1 are not included in Table 2, because returns were incomplete at the time of tabulation.

New England
- Cambridge
- Somerville
- Worcester

Middle Atlantic
- Utica
- Bayonne
- Camden
- The Oranges
- Jersey City
- Newark
- Paterson
- Trenton
- Harrisburg
- Reading

East North Central
- Canton
- Youngstown
- Indianapolis
- Flint

West North Central
- Duluth
- Des Moines
- Wichita

South Atlantic
- Richmond
- Atlanta
- Jacksonville
- Miami

East South Central
- Nashville

West South Central
- Oklahoma City
- Tulsa
- El Paso

Mountain and Pacific
- Salt Lake City

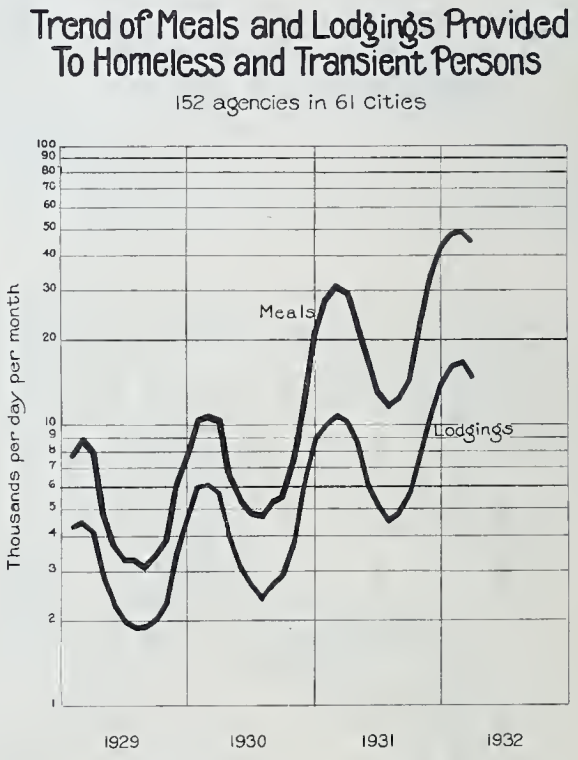
Nearly 500,000 Night's Lodgings and 1,500,000 Meals Provided to Homeless in March in 67 Cities

In the month of March, which marked the close of the 1931-32 winter season, the number of meals served to transient and homeless persons by 176 agencies in 67 cities totaled 1,458,102, while the number of night's lodgings furnished aggregated 486,405. Although March was the peak month for the distribution of family relief, the volume of transient service declined slightly from February to March. The average number of meals served per day in the 67 cities dropped 9 per cent between the two months; the average number of lodgings provided nightly decreased 7 per cent. Comparison of the daily averages for March, 1931, and March, 1932, on the other hand, reveals increase this year over last of 57 per cent in volume of meal service, and of 49 per cent in overnight shelter.

Volume of service	March 1931	February 1932	March 1932
Meals:			
Total	928,273	1,493,556	1,458,102
Daily average	29,944	51,502	47,036
Night's lodgings:			
Total	326,962	486,692	486,405
Daily average	10,547	16,782	15,690

Upward Trend in Meals and Lodgings Reflected by Diagram

Evidence of steadily increasing demands for food and lodging during the period of the depression is furnished by the diagram below which records the average daily volume of meals and lodgings in 61 cities in each month from January, 1929, to March, 1932. Both curves display a sharp upward trend over the period, with marked seasonal variations, but the curve representing meals served rises more steeply than the curve for lodgings. The ratio of meals to lodgings was in March, 1929, 1.9; in March, 1930, 1.8; in March, 1931, 2.9; and in March, 1932, 3.0. It will be noted that in each of these four years February is the peak month for both series.



In order to measure the rise in meals and lodgings on these curves, the average daily load in March of each year has been converted to a relative number, with March, 1929, which was a pre-depression month, representing 100. These relative numbers are tabulated below.

Type of service	March			
	1929	1930	1931	1932
Meals	100	130	369	571
Night's lodgings	100	136	244	360

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